Agricultural Changes Outline

* Europe was agrarian economy in the seventeenth century
* Open Field system:

-fields were open and divided into strips

-strips were not enclosed

-soil exhaustion resulted and land needed to lie fallow for a year

-clover and grasses sprang up during fallow that restored nutrients, but still no crops

* Three-year-rotations

-one year wheat or rye, one year beans or oats, one year fallow

-peasants staggered crops: some wheat, legumes, pastureland always available

-villages maintained open meadows for hay and natural pasture

* New Crop Rotation: Fallow period completely gone

-land in continuous cultivation

-alternate grain with crops that restored nutrients to soil: peas, beans, turnips,

potatoes, clover, grasses

-clover: restored nitrogen to soil through its roots

-potatoes: nutritious for peasant’s diet

* fodder, hay, root veggies=more herds of cattle and sheep=more manure to fertilize soil
* Enclosure: adopted in Low Countries and England-encouraged by Arthur Young

-advocates of the new crop rotations believed the new methods wouldn’t work with open

fields and common rights.

-people who wanted improvement argued that agriculturalists needed to enclose and

consolidate their holdings to farm more effectively.

-small landowners didn’t like it: relied on traditional rights as pastureland to graze

livestock, so they opposed it

-nobles didn’t like it either: enclosure required large investments in purchasing fencing

land

* Dutch Republic: leaders in drainage

-intensive farming, enclosed fields, crop rotation, heavy manuring, crop variety

-increasing population=need to feed and employ themselves=need to make use of

and cultivate their land=development of steady draining of swamps and marshes

-large population=markets for peasants=each region specialized in what they did best

* English: borrowed crop rotation and drainage from Dutch who drained their marshes
* Cornelius Vermuyden: large drainage projects in Yorkshire and Cambridgeshire
* Jethro Tull: preferred horses over oxen and sowing seed with drilling equipment
* Enclosure caused social upheaval:no common rights, less access for poor

-resulted in rise of market-oriented estate agriculture

-resulted in emergence of a landless rural proletariat

* Wealthy English and Scottish landowners had land-aggressively got profits

-leased holdings to middle size farmers who relied on landless laborers

-landless laborers:long hours, less needed=unemployment

* Proletarianization:transformation of large numbers of small peasant farmers into landless rural wage earners